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INGLÉS**

**Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL  
classrooms: An Ecuadorian case.**

**TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN**

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## **Aprobación del Director del Trabajo de Titulación**

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DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case realizado por Christian Eduardo Meza Fiallos ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por lo tanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, noviembre de 2016

f) .....

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## **Declaración de Autoría y Cesión de Derechos**

“Yo, Meza Fiallos Christian Eduardo declaro ser autor del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: “Students’ perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case”, de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo la magister Elsa Liria Morocho Cuenca, directora del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad. Adicionalmente, declaro conocer y aceptar la disposición del Art. 88 del Estatuto Orgánico de la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja que en su parte pertinente textualmente dice: “Forman parte del patrimonio de la Universidad la propiedad intelectual de investigaciones, trabajos científicos o técnicos y tesis de grado que se realicen a través, o con el apoyo financiero, académico o institucional (operativo) de la Universidad”

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## **Dedication**

The present thesis is dedicated to my daughter who I love so much, my mom who has been with me during good and bad times, my sister who has always been an example for me to follow and my brother who has always been a friend more than a brother.

Christian

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## **Abstract**

The present study Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case has, as a main objective to investigate the learner's listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom encountered in EFL students in order to improve their listening comprehension. The population chosen for the research was 125 students from 5 different senior English classrooms from private Ecuadorian high schools in the city of Quito as well as 5 teachers who work with these courses. The data was collected both quantitatively and qualitatively to detect the listening problems through surveys, interviews and note-taking. The results were tabulated, analyzed and contrasted one another to have a more clear idea about listening comprehension difficulties of students in EFL class. Results gathered revealed that although learners possess a good comprehension of listening input, they still share some difficulties when they listen to material for the first time, when they face hesitation and pauses on part of the speaker, meaning of unknown words, difficult grammar structures and lack of vocabulary. The research provides appropriate and helpful recommendations to overcome these problems when listening to English material.

**Keywords:** Listening problems, listening comprehension process, listening skill, listening perceptions.



## **Resumen**

El presente estudio “Percepción de los estudiantes sobre las dificultades en su comprensión auditiva en clases de Inglés como lengua extranjera: en el caso de Ecuador” tiene como principal objetivo investigar las dificultades de comprensión auditiva encontradas en estudiantes de Inglés como lengua extranjera para mejorar la comprensión auditiva. La muestra escogida para la investigación fue de 125 estudiantes de 5 diferentes cursos de 2do de bachillerato de colegios privados en Quito con los 5 profesores que trabajan con estos cursos. Los datos fueron recolectados de forma cualitativa y cuantitativa para detectar los problemas auditivos a través de encuestas, entrevistas y toma de notas. Los resultados fueron tabulados, analizados y contrastados mutuamente para tener una idea más clara de las dificultades de los estudiantes en las clases de Inglés como lengua extranjera. Los resultados obtenidos revelaron que aunque los estudiantes poseen una buena comprensión del material escuchado, aun comparten algunas dificultades cuando ellos escuchan información por primera vez, cuando se enfrentan a pausas y dudas por parte del que habla, significado de palabras desconocidas, estructuras gramaticales difíciles y falta de vocabulario. La investigación provee recomendaciones apropiadas y de mucha ayuda para superar estos problemas cuando se escucha material en Inglés.

**Palabras Clave:** Problemas auditivos, proceso de comprensión auditiva, destreza auditiva, percepciones.

## **Introduction**

Among all English language skills, listening has been considered one of the most difficult to develop but teachers have not put the needed effort to make English learners master it due to the complexity of its nature.

It is well known by English learners that learning the grammatical structure is not so complicated but understanding the utterance of English speakers is another story. Many English learners fail exams because they have not been able to overcome their listening comprehension difficulties and consequently, they cannot improve their language learning.

That is the reason why the present research with the topic: "Students' perceptions on their listening comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms: An Ecuadorian case" is carried out through the following questions: how do the listener factors affect their listening comprehension? do the speaker factors interfere on the learners' listening skills? and how does the listening passage hinder the students' listening comprehension?

English language, as the rest of the other foreign languages, is learned through 4 skills where the one that stands out is listening because it allows the listener to comprehend the information requested.

As Hamouda (2013) states "...listening ability is the critical component in achieving understandable language input" (p. 113). His study "...attempts to investigate the listening problems encountered by a group of first year English major students of Qassim University" (p. 113). The conclusion he reached "...showed that accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of speakers, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording were the major listening comprehension problems encountered by EFL Saudi learners" (p. 113).

Thus, it is necessary to look into the listening process that takes place on students and the difficulties they face. The purpose of his study was "...to examine changes in EFL listening problems encountered by students and how they dealt with these listening problems as they develop their strategy use over time" (p. 81). His results "...showed that there were three major significant differences in students' perceived listening problems after the strategy instruction: they are unfamiliar vocabulary, rapid speech rate and linking sounds between words" (p.81).

Another study about listening comprehension difficulty was done by Gökhan (2015) who carried out the research in order to "...to examine the listening problems faced by a group of first year university students whose English proficiency level is elementary" (p. 257). The conclusion

of his study proves problems EFL students face when understanding the listening text when speakers speak with diverse and unknown accents.

The findings of this research can be used by teachers, students interested in the topic and any educational institutes to identify the listening problems and to give recommendation in order to improve the listening comprehension process on English learners in Ecuadorian high Schools.

## **Chapter I: Literature Review**

This section aims to explain the overview of the scientific research about listening comprehension difficulties in English Foreign Language in EFL classes. Listening is one of the most important skills in second language acquisition. In fact, the importance of this skill becomes clear in the first contact of humans with the language when they are babies and they listen to their parents. The language is, then, learned and developed over time.

There are some factors that learners face when learning English that make them have problems understanding any kind of speech. Thus, scientists, who have been studying how languages are learned, have done several studies and research about the difficulties of understanding English as a foreign language.

### **Listening Comprehension**

Listening has always played a very important role in human life and it has been present since very early stages in humans. The acquisition of the language starts when we hear the first sounds and words from our parents as babies. As Lighbown and Spada (2013) mentions “even though they have little control over the sounds they make in these early weeks of life, infants are able to hear very subtle differences between the sounds of human languages” (p. 2). However, as babies keep growing up and becoming children their listening comprehension process gets more complex until they are adults.

Little by little they start to understand what they hear until they are ready to use the same words when they speak. The same happens when people learn a foreign language, because the more learners hear, the more they understand it and in a better way. Another positive aspect is that it helps to improve pronunciation. Harmer (2011), explains in a better detail “the more they hear and understand English being spoken, the more they absorb appropriate pitch and intonation, stress and the sounds of both individual words and those which blend together in connected speech” (p. 133).

Therefore, if we compare listening with the other skills such as speaking, reading and writing, this one is very important because learners can understand one another and improve their speaking and pronunciation. It is interesting to notice that a good communication relies on not only how well we speak but also how effective we listen to. Thus, how does listening comprehension take place?

The way people understand the language is by using the bottom-up and top-down processes. Wilson (2008) explains these two models on listening comprehension:

The bottom-up model emphasizes the decoding of the smallest

units -phonemes and syllables- to lead us towards meaning. The approach is based on discrete units of language in the text. The top-down model emphasizes the use of background knowledge to content. This may refer to world knowledge, knowledge of the speaker or context or analogy (if the situation is similar, listeners can guess what they are going to hear next). The top-down model is based, at least in part, on the listener; much on the conversation relies on what happens in the mind before the listening has begun, whereas the bottom-up approach depends more on the sounds heard (p. 15).

On the other hand, listening goes beyond just hear, Goh (as cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Snow, 2014) mentions that listening is “an active process that may begin even before the first speech signal is recognized and it may go on long after the input or spoken information has stopped” (p. 73). In addition to this, when a person listens to something and tries to understand it he or she must combine or use many things learned before at all levels of text such as sounds, grammar, lexis and discourse structure and also the contexts like the topic, the participants, the communication purpose and so on.

Regarding the purpose of listening, Ur (2004) mentions that usually “...we have some preconceived idea of the content, formality level and so on of the discourse we are about to hear” (p. 3). He calls it, “script competence”, namely the knowledge we have in advance about the context of the discourse. Also, people usually turn on the TV to hear the news because they have a desire to know what is happening in the world and we expect to hear certain subjects of current interest. Also, when we are hearing a lecture, we know what the topic will be about. If none of these conditions fulfill we are talking about neither listening nor understanding. Thus, people listen for purpose because they are interested in something they want to know more about.

Another interesting breakthrough happens when the learner wants to understand what people say from different sources such as the radio, the news, interviews, and small or long dialogues. Regarding this, Nation and Newton (2009) states that learners usually draw cues from context and without paying attention to how the sentence is structured, that is, we can understand without noticing.

### **The listener**

Concerning the listener, Goh (as cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Snow, 2014) explains that listeners “...use skills and strategies all the time in order to direct and manage their listening processes to accomplish their communication” (p. 73). When listeners hear something, they

must process the information and must understand it quickly in order to keep talking. Regarding this, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) mention that “listeners must be able to process what they hear in real time and, concurrently, attend to new input” (p. 37).

On the other hand, listeners would benefit more if teachers put more emphasis on listening in class. Nation and Newton (2012) states that “it is possible to experience and learn much more of the language by just concentrating on listening. If learners had to be able to say all the material in the lessons, progress would be very slow” (p. 39). In other words, a listener would understand more and would learn to speak more easily and faster if concentrating on listening.

However, other linguists state that listening must be developed at the same time as speaking because the listener must give an immediate response to what another person has said. This could be verbal or non-verbal. For instance, it is verbal in role-plays when the learner has to react, saying something, at that precise moment and non-verbal when the listener responds with a nod of the head or the hands showing agreement or disagreement (Ur, 2004).

### **The speaker**

Regarding the speakers (students and teachers), all of them have a role to play in the learning process of a second language, because everybody uses the target language.

When teachers talk, students benefit because they are in contact with a higher level of the language and that way they can increase their listening comprehension. Whereas if students have more opportunities to talk, they can develop the speaking skill and most importantly they practice what they have learnt (Harmer, 2011).

Accordingly, the person who has to speak more in class depends on what students need most. Hearing in order to improve the listening comprehension or speaking in order to practice the structure? A good teacher has to balance the use of both techniques STT: Student Talking Time and TTT: Teacher Talking Time. Concerning this, Harmer (2011) states that:

The best lessons, therefore, are the ones where Students Talking Time: STT is maximized but where at appropriate moments during the lesson the teacher is not afraid to summarize what is happening, tell a story or enter into discussion. Good teachers use their common sense and experience to get the balance right (p. 38).

Although students need time and opportunities to practice their own speaking, they also need time to hear the teacher. Therefore, listeners become listeners and speakers at some point in the learning process.

Regarding *the speaker*, it is also important to notice that learners should hear authentic English. Hammer (2011) mentions this when he talks about speech, spoken mainly by native or proficient speakers with no concessions for the learner. That way, learners can hear real English with all its variations, accents and dialects from native speakers.

### **The listening passage**

The listening passage is affected by the kind of speech whether formal or informal because when English speakers use the language, they use a particular type of speech. Ur (2004) mentions that there are many types: the extremely formal with examples of some political speeches, the fairly formal in news-reading or lectures, fairly informal in interviews or things said in class and very informal in gossip or family quarrels.

Another view of the listening passage is given by Wilson (2009) who explains that what makes a listening class understandable and relevant to the learner is the type of content, in other words, the information, the passage or the message that learners are going to hear.

Wilson (2009) mentions that content involves “interest factor, entertainment, cultural accessibility, speech acts, discourse structures, density, language level, delivery, length, quality of recordings, speed and number of speakers and accent” (p.26-29). Teachers should take into consideration and vary these topics, as these ones will make the input more understandable and easier for listeners.

### **Listening Difficulties for EFL Learners (Listening Problems/Causes)**

One of the reasons listening is difficult for learners is because teachers do not give the seriousness that it deserves. Nation and Newton (2009) says that “...we often take the importance of listening for granted, and it is arguably the least understood and most overlooked of the four skills in the language classroom” (p. 37).

One factor that makes learners difficult to understand is the speaker’s accent. Ur (2004) explains that “many foreign-language learners who are used to the accent of their own teacher are surprised and dismayed when they find they have difficulty understanding someone else” (p. 20).

In fact, the voice of the speaker makes listeners difficult to understand English because people from different regions pronounce words in a different way, and one word could be used and pronounced differently from other regions. Harmer (2011) explains this topic with more detail:

There are significant regional variations in the way people speak English in a country like Britain. For example, the “a” of “bath” is pronounced like the vowel sounds in “park” in some parts of Britain, but like “a” in

“cat” in others (p. 133).

It is easy to notice that there are many words which are pronounced almost the same way and they can lead to misunderstanding of the idea. Kelly (2011) touches on this point when she talks about Minimal Pairs saying that modifying just one sound changes the meaning. For instance, English learners get confused in the pronunciation of “cat” /cæt/ and “cut” /cʌt/ because of the similarities in the vowel sounds of /æ/ and /ʌ/.

As Kelly (2011) mentions in her book “... a learner who consistently mispronounces a range of phonemes can be extremely difficult for a speaker from another language community to understand” (p. 11).

This pronunciation problem as Goh (as cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Snow, 2014) mentions “...captures learners’ limitations in listening where input is often incomplete because of their inability to recognize every word they hear” (p. 73).

Another factor that makes learners difficult to understand is the characteristic of the message, which has to do with how words are pronounced and misheard or misunderstood by the listener. Wilson (2009) states that “knowing the written form of a word is not a guarantee that students will recognize the spoken form” (p.13).

Referring to the same characteristic of the message, English learners find it difficult when the listening text is not attractive for them. Wilson (2009) mentions that if texts are funny, enjoyable and appealing, they are going to captivate the students’ attention and interest.

Another aspect that leads to a great difficulty is the degree of difference between the learner’s native language and the target language. Lightbown and Spada (2013) mention the reason:

The evidence supporting the hypothesis comes partly from the observation that it takes learners longer to reach a high level of fluency in a particular second foreign language if that language is substantially different from the languages they already know (p. 105).

Many students also face problems with background knowledge of the topic, this previous knowledge that learners have acquired before, should help them understand the topic, however, it does not happen that because of the amount of information in the text. Wilson (2009) says that if learners go on to the next part in the conversation, without analyzing this new information to clarify ideas, that will place a burden on the listener and that information will not be understood when it appears again in the future because it has not been learned yet.

Finally, the lack of features of the language (grammatical rules and tenses) is another problem for learners since it plays an important role in the acquisition of the language not



because of the particular message they convey but for the spoken and written form, their meaning and the patterns that they fit into the discourse (Nation and Newton, 2012).

### **Strategies and Activities to Develop Listening Comprehension Skill**

There are a great number of strategies and activities for teachers to use. When learners try to understand a listening passage, they resort to skills and sub-skills that help them to grasp ideas and details but “process will still largely be effortful and deliberate and the learners need to use appropriate listening strategies” (Goh as cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Snow, 2014, p. 79).

For example, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) mention 12 strategies that occur in the learning process referred to the listening skill. 1: Planning, 2: Focusing attention, 3: Monitoring, 4: Evaluation, 5: Inferencing, 6: Elaboration, 7: Prediction, 8: Contextualization, 9: Reorganization, 10: Using linguistic and learning resources, 11: Cooperation, 12: Managing emotions.

Wilson (2008) states that strategies can be divided into three categories: cognitive, metacognitive and socio-effective strategies. The first one has to do with completing an immediate task drawing on their knowledge of L1 to know something about the topic they are about to listen to.

The metacognitive one has to do with learning something in general and has long-term benefits, for instance, when learners hear conferences or expositions by scholars every week.

And the last one, socio-effective strategy is about the interactions between other speakers and their attitude about learning. For example, when they meet to practice specific dialogues at the airport (Wilson, 2008).

For instance, Goh (as cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Snow, 2014) suggests that the first thing that every teacher has to do is to discover the problems that learners have when listening to a passage. One of the problems is converting what they listen into an appropriate message. While they try to understand the first part they may miss what goes next.

On the other hand, Nation and Newton (2009) mention two strategies that can be used in the listening process. The first one is communicative strategy, which is to help during the comprehension process, for example, making predictions before listening, listening selectively, knowing how to interrupt politely, etc. The second one has to do with learning strategies which notice language forms in the information that enters the mind in their independent listening, for example, negotiating, listening for patterns and focused listening.

Another strategy offered by Herrell and Jordan (2012) is Dictogloss which can be used for students of all ages and different levels where students get involved in 3 skills: listening, speaking and writing. Talking about listening, the teacher reads aloud a text and students just

listen but then when they listen again, they take down as much of the reading as they can. Then, they gather in pairs and then in groups of four in order to re-create the text just heard with the help and share of all the members of the groups. This activity presents a very good opportunity for students to listen and to communicate ideas in order to connect all the parts of the story that the teacher read and the students listened.

Harmer (2011) provides some activities to do in class. One of them is monologues where students can listen to lectures and take notes or they can listen to “vox-pop” interviews where learners have to match their opinions with five people. Learners can listen to dramatic or comic monologues and say how the speaker feels or what the main idea is. Also, learners can listen to people saying what they think or what the subject is about in weddings, farewells or openings.

In order to give more scientific support, several studies have been researched and included in the present literature review to understand better both the listening skill and the difficulties that learners face when learning the language.

The first study carried out by Chen (2013) looked into students’ perceived listening problems over time as they develop their listening strategies. The data were collected both quantitatively and qualitatively to examine changes in EFL listening problems encountered by students and how they dealt with these problems as they develop their strategy use over time. They received listening strategy instruction two hours per week for fourteen weeks. Thus, the findings of this study showed that the strategy instruction (e.g., modeling and discussions in class and self-reflections outside class) positively empowered students with problem-solving abilities, so that they were better able to harmonize their strategy use, listening problems, learning progress and other individual factors as they tighten their strategy use.

The second study performed by Hamouda (2013) states that though listening ability is one of the important skills in foreign language learning, there has been relatively little research in this specific area. This study is done in the hope of finding out the factors causing students’ listening comprehension problems and contributing some recommended strategies for teachers and students employ in improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning listening comprehension.

Regarding the methodology, data was gathered by means of questionnaires and interviews. Research results have thrown the following conclusions:

1. Students at Qassim University encounter various kinds of listening problems in learning comprehension such as unfamiliar words, the length of the spoken text, speed rate, a variety of accents, lack of concentration and pronunciation.

2. Some suggestions that could be employed for teachers and students to encounter listening comprehension problems include adapting and improving listening materials, and improving teachers' classroom techniques on the part of the teachers. As for students, they can alleviate their own difficulties by improving English proficiency, and improving listening strategies.

The third study done by Nowrouzi (2015) considers listening a problematic skill where practice opportunities are limited. This study aims to explore the listening comprehension problems of a group of EFL learners. Survey method was followed to collect data from a group of Iranian tertiary level EFL learners (n = 100) using the Listening Comprehension Processing Problems Questionnaire. The results indicated that the learners experienced moderate to high levels of difficulty in all three categories of listening comprehension problems, namely perception, parsing, and utilization.

The most dominant problems were distraction and missing or misperceiving sounds and words related to perception, chunking difficulties and sentence forgetting concerned with parsing and confusion about the main idea pertaining to utilization. Based on the results, the participants in the present study suffered almost equally from all three categories of problems. This means that in L2 listening courses perception, parsing, and utilization problems should be emphasized equally. Due to the primary importance of perception and parsing problems, equally important areas of difficulty like pragmatic and discorsal problems can be neglected. Material developers, syllabus designers and L2 teachers should pay particular attention to learners' utilization problems since owing to their implicit nature it is likely that learners fail to recognize their own pragmatic and discourse problems.

The fourth study carried out by Gökhan (2015) says that listening is clearly the weakest skill of EFL students and it is the most underestimated skill in EFL context. This study seeks to examine the listening problems faced by a group of first year university students whose English proficiency level is elementary. 50 EFL students from three different classes were voluntarily selected for the study. The data was gathered by means of a questionnaire and an interview. If we do not develop strategies to aid the learners to comprehend the needed input, then learning does not occur. Listening skill has been ignored in EFL context, as well as being underestimated in research literature when compared to other skills of English.

The research results have routed us to reach at the following conclusions:

1. Students find it difficult to comprehend the listening text when speakers speak with varied and unfamiliar accents.
2. Students find it difficult to comprehend the meanings of words which are not pronounced clearly.

3. Students find it difficult to quickly remember words or phrases they have just heard.

Furthermore, either in high school or university education process, listening skill was a pain in the necks of the students taking part in the study. It was their worst skill among the other language skills. They encountered various problems in listening comprehension activities as they did not have the needed opportunities to practise listening skill. Most of the students were not exposed to a native speaker of English, for instance.

The fifth study researched by Bozorgian and Pillay (2013) claim that listening refers to a complex process that allows us to understand spoken language. The current study, conducted in Iran with an experimental design, investigated the effectiveness of teaching listening strategies delivered in L1 (Persian) and its effect on listening comprehension in L2. These strategies were: Guessing, making inferences, identifying topics, repetition, and note-taking were taught over 14 weeks during a semester. Sixty lower intermediate female participants came from two EFL classrooms. The experimental class ( $n = 30$ ) who listened to their classroom activities performed better

( $t$  value = 10.083) than the control class using a methodology that led learners through five listening strategies in Persian.

Results gathered on the post intervention listening test revealed that listening strategies delivered in L1 led to a statistically significant improvement in their discrete listening scores compared with the control group.

While many students are confident in their listening ability in the comfort of their ESL context, they are less confident in comprehending oral information when it comes to EFL contexts. This study suggests that L1 listening strategy instruction such as *guessing, making inferences, identifying topics, repetition and note-taking* can improve students' listening comprehension of information better in an EFL context than just adopting the traditional approach.

The result of this study provides a starting point for further research into what kinds of listening strategies students will mostly use to tackle their listening problems in Iran and other Middle Eastern countries.

## **Chapter II: Method**

### **Setting and Participants**

This research was carried out in the city of Quito, being the sample for this study, 125 students from 5 different senior English classrooms that were taken from private high schools with their 5 teachers who teach in these courses. The participation of the students and the teachers were anonymous. What is more, the English level of the students was not regarded either. They just had to be senior students from 2<sup>nd</sup> year of secondary. Teachers participated in the research filling out a survey form that contained the same questions as the students' but with a teacher's perspective.

### **Procedures**

The literature review is an indispensable aspect of this research and it was built up with help of the Internet, books, and journals about listening comprehension difficulties. Additionally, useful data on previous studies from researches done around the world were collected as a way to support the importance of listening skill and demonstrate the difficulties that ESL and EFL learners have to face on to comprehend all kind of speech. The topics, considered for this research, are related to listening comprehension, elements of listening comprehension: the listener, the speaker and the listening passage; listening comprehension difficulties for EFL learners: listening problems and causes; strategies and activities to develop listening comprehension skill.

The methods of this study were quantitative and qualitative. The techniques applied were surveys, note-taking and interviews. The surveys were aimed to collect the most relevant information and note-taking to collect first hand data that served as base of the investigation. Moreover, the interviews were used as research technique which help to facilitate the process of gathering information.

For gathering the data, two high schools were visited in order to carry out this research. Three classrooms from one high school and two from another were selected to administer the student's questionnaire. The students were learners from 2<sup>nd</sup> year of senior. In each classroom, 25 students were chosen to answer the questionnaire, and three students per classroom were applied the interviews. Besides, five teachers were chosen to answer the questionnaire in terms of obtaining the teacher's opinion about the listening comprehension difficulties for English foreign language.

The instruments designed for this research were a questionnaire and an interview sheet for students. The student's questionnaire was composed of eighteen questions; nine of them were designed to obtain information about the listener difficulties, four questions in relation to the speaker and five of them with reference to the listening passage. The interview sheet was planned in order to obtain the student's opinion about the factors that affect the listening comprehension and what they do when they do not understand the listening passage.

After gathering the information from questionnaire and interviews, the data was organized in tables to be quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Moreover, tables were created in order to facilitate the identification of the main factors affecting listening comprehension and the description of the results. The outcomes obtained from the student's surveys were contrasted against the teacher's questionnaire and the students' interview for a further analysis.

The tabulation process was done by counting the answers given by each student of each statement in 5 frequency words never, seldom, sometimes, often, always in order to know in what statement most of the students have more problems and what advice can be provided.

For the interpretation and analysis of the results, both scientific studies and books were used to give academic support and to provide recommendations to improve the students' comprehension on listening input.

## **Chapter III: Results and Discussion**

### **Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results**

This section analyzes the results encountered on English learners about their listening comprehension difficulties. The results of the data were collected both quantitatively and qualitatively through surveys and questionnaires applied to students and their teachers for the purpose of identifying the factors that make them difficult to understand listening information. A contrast with the data collected from the teachers' surveys and students' questionnaire and interviews were also performed to detect the problems that EFL learners have. Additionally, the data was interpreted and analyzed with information supported by studies and books in order to sustain research and to obtain a clear comprehension of the topic.

The following analysis is carried out, taking into consideration the three factors that intervene in the listening comprehension process of learning a language: the listener, the speaker and the listening passage factors.

The data are displayed on three tables for each factor (listener, speaker and message) with its respective statements with its percentages. Each statement shows the frequency (never, seldom, sometimes, often and always) when students have most problems with and are discussed for a better analysis.

#### **How do listener factors affect their listening comprehension?**

When learning a language, the first factor to consider is the one related to *"the listener"* and his difficulties. Language researchers have studied the factors involved in the listening comprehension from the listener's perspective. They say that all listeners use strategies to process the information as quickly as possible in order to achieve the communication.

On the other hand, the listener would benefit more if they were more time involved in the listening skill. They would learn to speak faster because they would be in contact with more phrases, words and the sound of the language. In contrast to them, other researchers say that both skills listening and speaking should be taught at the same time because the listener must respond immediately when he hears something to continue with the conversation.

**Table 1**

<i><b>Item no.</b></i>	<i><b>Statements</b></i>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
		<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
1	I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage	24	36.8	31.2	7.2	0.8
2	I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage	23.2	39.2	27.2	7.2	3.2
3	I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language	36.8	37.6	19.2	4	2.4
4	After my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next	22.4	44.8	21.6	9.6	1.6
5	I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage	45.6	30.4	17.6	6.4	0
6.	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time	28.8	44.9	18.3	7.2	0.8
7.	I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage	27.2	32	23.2	12.8	4.8
8	I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me	37.6	36	19.2	4.8	2.4
9	I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud	32.8	26.4	24.8	12.8	3.2

Author: Christian Meza

Source: Students' Questionnaire

The following aspects related to the listener, which help to identify the causes for students to have difficulty in understanding listening skills, are the following.



Talking about the first factor *I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage*, the highest percentage is 36.8% for seldom. That means that students have a good quantity of vocabulary such as verbs, nouns, adverbs and know how to use grammatical structures and have knowledge of different topics of English. As a result, they do not need to resort to their background knowledge of the topic to understand it.

This high English level could be attributed to the type of high school where the field research was carried out because they were bilingual with more than 15 hours of English every week and to the preparation for international exam such as FCE and CAE according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

However, there are still many students with a percentage of 31.2 % who sometimes have difficulties. This could perhaps be because of the quantity of information that has not been learned yet by learners. Wilson (2009) says that if learners go on to the next part in the conversation, without analyzing this new information to clarify ideas, that will place a burden on the listener and that information will not be understood when it appears again in the future.

In addition, Goh ( as cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Snow, 2014) mentions that students must combine or use the contents learned previously at all levels of texts such as sounds, grammar, lexis and discourse structure and also the contexts like the topic, the participants and the communication purpose.

The surveyed teachers agreed with the same fact that students seldom use their experience and prior knowledge in case they do not understand the listening passage. Similarly, students who were interviewed said that they used this strategy (to use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage) in previous years when they did not reach a good level of comprehension.

Therefore, if students do understand the input, there is no need to resort to their background knowledge to understand because the listening passage is clear for them.

Regarding the second statement "*I listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage*". The highest percentage is 39.2% for seldom, too. That indicates that most of students seldom resort to pay more attention to the details of the passages such as dates, numbers, years, hours to understand the main idea because their English level allows them to grasp the input. In other words, this strategy is not used by most of the students because they do not need to. However, some students said in the interviews that they sometimes pay attention to all the details in case they do not understand the main idea of the passage.

There are a great number of strategies and activities that students can use. When learners try to understand a listening passage, they use skills that help them to understand

specific ideas and details but as Goh says “process will still largely be effortful and deliberate and the learners need to use appropriate listening strategies” (Goh, 2014, p. 79).

The teachers who participated in the questionnaire do not agree with the majority of students’ answers, contrarily, they chose that students sometimes listen to every detail of the passage to understand it. This might be due to the fact that it is easier to grasp the main idea than to pay attention to every detail. Anyway, both students and teachers agree that this statement is not a factor that interferes with the total comprehension of the listening passage because this does not happen often.

Concerning the third statement *I find it difficult to do listening activities because of my lack of knowledge of English language*. Most students chose the parameter seldom with 37.6% which shows that students do not have difficulties in understanding the listening passages. However, there is also a percentage of 4 % for often and 2.4 % for always which shows that it is still difficult to do listening activities for some students. About this pronunciation problem Goh (as cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Snow, 2014) mentions “...captures learners’ limitations in listening where input is often incomplete because of their inability to recognize every word they hear” (p. 73).

From surveyed teachers, it is noticeable that three of them agreed with students about the point that they seldom have problems by understanding the listening passage, whereas the remaining two said that students never do not have problems understanding the main idea of the passage.

Again, this could be attributed to the fact that these high schools such as Letort, Spellman have a high English level because they teach students subjects in English such as Geography, Social Studies, Science and of course, English as a subject. Consequently, students are able to reach a good quantity of vocabulary and subject contents in order not to have lack of knowledge problems.

The fourth statement has to do with *after my teacher stops the recording, I find it difficult to predict what will come next*. Again most of students chose seldom with a percentage of 44.8% to say that they do not have difficulty to predict what will come next when the teacher stops the recording. That indicates that students understand what they were listening to and they have a clear idea of what comes next. However, there is still a good quantity of students (21.6%) that sometimes cannot predict what comes next as they cannot keep up with the speaker in the recording because they are still trying to figure out the meaning of specific words but they miss others that come next.

On the contrary, students who seldom have difficulty predicting the information, said in the interviews that when they listen to a conversation, they try to grasp the ideas they understood and they will guess the coming parts.

According to the answers that teachers gave regarding this statement in the questionnaire, they agreed with students that most of the time, it is not difficult for them to predict what comes next in the listening passage in the EFL classes.

This does not represent a problem for students with a high mastery of the language because as Ur (2004) says in his book "...we have some preconceived idea of the content, formality level and so on of the discourse we are about to hear" (p. 3). Therefore, students with a high number of class hours are better prepared to have a clear idea of what comes next in the passage.

As to the fifth statement, *I find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage*. 45.6 % of students show that most students never have difficulty to talk about the passage for a short time. Even students, whose English level is not as good as the strong students, do not have difficulties because no-one chose the always parameter.

This shows again that the level of the high schools used for the present research is good and that speaking is not viewed as difficult as listening because no-one has difficulty to talk about the passage to express at least few ideas, according to the survey's results. However, listening still remains difficult for some of them. This could perhaps be because they did not understand the accent of the speaker. As to this point, Ur (2004) mentions that learners paralyze when they hear a different accent from their teacher in a conversation and as a result, they feel reluctant to talk.

On the contrary, teachers disagree with them a little because when learners have to hold a short dialogue, just few of them share their ideas whereas the rest remains silent. This might be for the difficulty of the topic of the listening material, the enthusiasm that teachers put on the topic and also to the shyness of the students.

The sixth statement involves *I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time*. The result thrown by the survey shows that students seldom have difficulty by understanding the passage for the first time, as 44.9 % of them chose this parameter. That seems to demonstrate that most students do not need to listen to the passage twice in order to have a general understanding.

On the contrary, 28.8 % of students chose never to show that many students never have difficulty understanding the passage at the beginning.

Teachers agreed with the percentage that almost all the students do not need to hear the listening material twice because they can grasp the main ideas and are able to talk about it. However, during the interview, students said that understanding the general idea at first is not so difficult, the hardest thing is to break down the conversation by parts.

This could be probably because students, who have been receiving classes in these high schools, have started from the initial grades (2<sup>nd</sup> graders). That shows the need to put a learner from the beginning of the basic education years at school where the level is good and they have 15 class hours more or less every week.

The seventh statement has to do with *I feel nervous and worried when I do not understand the listening passage*. Again most students chose that they seldom feel nervous and worried with a percentage of 32% because they understand most of the information without much problem.

The interviewed students said that very few of them feel bad when they do not understand the listening passage. Similarly, teachers said students can feel nervous during the listening activity but they do not show that feeling in class.

These results on students could be caused because of the teachers' help during the class since when students do a listening activity, they know they will understand it with the teacher's explanation or with their own English level. The problem might arise where listening is not so reinforced with the consequence of a low level in students. As a result, they tend to feel nervous when either taking a listening test or doing a listening activity.

Regarding the eighth point *I find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of interest to me*. Most students chose the parameter "never" with a 37.6% to show that most students always find the listening passage interesting and as a result, understanding the topic is not difficult for them.

The possible cause for this 37.6% could be the appealing and attractive presentation of the book and topics. That attracts students' attention and make them predispose to listen and understand the listening passage.

On the contrary, the data thrown by the teachers' questionnaire contrasts with the students' because most of the teachers chose "sometimes" to show that the listening passage is not interesting to students. Consequently, students start to get bored when doing a listening activity because they do not like it. Regarding this, Wilson (2009) mentions that when listening texts are funny, enjoyable and gripping, students feel more interested and willing to listen to the input.

The last statement of the listener factors has relationship with *I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud*. About this statement, a 32.8 % of students chose the parameter never to indicate that they do not have difficulty to understand the recording or the teacher either.

This result shows that high schools with International Baccalaureate (IB) like Letort try hard to hire teachers who either were born in English-speaking countries or lived in those countries many years so that they speak English fluently with almost no accent.

Nevertheless, there is just a small percentage of students (3.2%) who do have more difficulty when listening to a recorded text than to the teacher reading.

After analyzing all statements that have an effect on the listener in comprehension process, there is one factor in which the majority of students have problems, though seldom namely, to have difficulty to get a general understanding for the first time.

Although the problem does not happen all the time but seldom, these results show that both the listening comprehension and English level is very high at these high schools and that this is what helps students to understand the passage for the first time. Students are being trained for FCE exam that shows an upper intermediate level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

### **Do the speaker factors interfere on the learners' listening skill?**

The next factor that plays a role in the listening comprehension process is "*the speaker*". Students benefit in two directions concerning this point. Harmer (2011) mentions that students take advantage when they listen to their teachers because they get a chance to hear language above their productive level and that way they can improve the listening skill but also they have opportunities to talk either in free discussions or speaking activities.

However, the problem starts when the students become the speakers and their classmates do not understand the listening input with clarity because their pronunciation is not so clear or they do not use a correct use of grammar.

Additionally, students face problems by listening when they are in contact with other variations of the language such as different accents and pronunciation if they come from different nationalities. Harmer (2011) explains this topic with more detail:

There are significant regional variations in the way people speak English in a country like Britain. For example, the "a" of "bath" is pronounced like the vowel sounds in "park" in some parts of Britain, but like "a" in "cat" in others (p. 133).

Regarding *the speaker*, it is also important to notice that learners should hear authentic English. Hammer (2011) mentions that this speech is not spoken just for English learners but for native or proficient speakers with no concessions for the learner.

**Table 2**

<b>Item no.</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
		<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
10.	I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses	20	50.4	24	4	1.6
11.	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly	8.8	48.8	31.2	8.8	2.4
12.	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast	15.2	38.4	28	14.4	4
13.	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents	11.2	40.8	32	14.4	1.6

Author: Christian Meza

Source: Students' Questionnaire

The following factors related to the speaker help to identify the causes to have difficulty in understanding listening input and they are the following.

In the tenth factor *I find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses*, the highest percentage was 50.4 % for the parameter seldom, meaning that students from this private high schools apparently do not have much difficulty understanding native people if they speak with full of hesitation and pauses. However, there is still a high percentage (24 %) of students who sometimes have problems understanding listening input on part of the speaker caused by hesitations and pauses.

This might be because frequent pauses goes faster and slower, louder and softer, higher and lower. Also, hesitations, interruptions, exclamations causes an uneven and constantly changing rhythm of speech which make listening comprehension difficult for learners (Ur, 2004).

It is interesting to take into consideration that the teachers, who took the questionnaire, do not agree with the students' results because 4 % of them chose "often" and 1.6 % of them chose "sometimes". That might suggest that students do have problems when they face hesitation or pauses in natural speech by a native speaker but that does not interfere with the whole comprehension of the input.

Consequently, students feel secure about their listening comprehension and that does not hold them back to continue having a conversation.

The eleventh factor regarding the speaker is *I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly*. In this statement, most of the students chose "seldom" with a 48.8 % meaning that students seldom have difficulty to understand when English speakers do not pronounce the word clearly.

However, there is a number of students with a percentage of 31.2 % who recognize that they sometimes have problems to understand listening input if words are not pronounced clearly. That can be caused because learners have not reached a higher-level process and as the information processed at the phonological level is related to the previous knowledge of the learner, these listening features do not permit learners to interpret the meaning of the utterance (Goh, 2014).

The teachers participating in the survey said that students often have problems when the speaker does not pronounce words clearly. That might happen when students have a speaking activity and they do not pronounce words or phrases well.

Concerning the cause of mishearing the words, Ur (2004) states that "Student is not used to the stress and intonation patterns of English and the way these influence both the realization of certain phonemes and the meaning of the utterance" (p. 12).

Consequently, the listening comprehension is affected because of these words badly pronounced.

The twelfth point is *I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast*. Now again, students chose with a 38.4 % that they seldom have difficulty to understand when

speakers talk too fast. Though, other group of students chose “sometimes” with a 28% meaning that both groups of students have difficulty to understand fast speech.

Nevertheless, 28% of the interviewed teachers chose “sometimes. That might show that when speakers talk too fast from real English such as news or interviews to people on streets or on TV, students tend to understand less.

As Wilson (2008) mentions “Rapid speech, such as that heard in BBC news headlines, is more difficult for students than the speech rates of, say, an adult talking to a young child” (p. 29). Therefore, it is true that students struggle with fast speech and teachers should choose listening input according to students’ level.

The thirteenth point is the following *I find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents*. Many participants in the surveys chose “seldom” with a 38.4 % to say that they do not have much difficulty when speakers talk with varied accents. However, there is still a 32 % of students who do recognize that they sometimes have problems to understand listening input because of accent.

This might be caused because there are accents more or less difficult to understand and to notice in the discourse removed from the variety learned (Ur, 2004).

Regarding the teachers’ questionnaire sheet, 3 of them agreed that the accent makes listener get lost in the recordings and consequently, they often have problems to understand the listening passages. Whereas 2 of them chose “sometimes” to show that the accent does hinder the comprehension of the students. This result is supported by the answers of the 25 interviewed students who blame the accent for not understanding the input.

They said that when the dialogues and conversations had different accents such as the Japanese and Arabic ones, they got lost and it is difficult for them to return to the thread of the conversation.

Certainly, accent influences listeners to misunderstand some ideas but it is also true that they must try to get used to it, because learners are going to face those varied accents in real conversations out of the class.

Ur (2014) highlights the influence that accent has on listeners:

Strictly speaking there is rarely such a thing as a “wrong” accent:

there are simply accents that are more or less difficult to understand



–that is, broadly speaking, ones that are more or less removed from the original variety learned. We must remember also that the English many of our students will need to understand may very well not be spoken in a native accent at all (p. 20).

After analyzing all the speaker factors, 50.4 % of students claimed that they seldom have problems when listening to hesitation and pauses in natural speech when a native speaker is talking. Even though this 50.4 % shows that learners have this kind of listening comprehension problem, it is seldom and consequently, it does not have a considerable impact on the general understanding of the listening material because it does not happen frequently.

### **How does the listening passage hinder the students' listening comprehension?**

The final factor that has an impact on the comprehension of the listeners is related to the *"listening passage"* or in other words the content of the listening material.

When EFL students listen to it, they face some aspects that hinder their comprehension of the material. One aspect that English learners must identify is the type of speech they are listening whether extremely formal like political speeches, fairly formal such as lectures, conferences etc, fairly informal like interviews and things said in class or very informal like family quarrels.

Another point to consider is the type of content they listen to because it is a determining factor to make the listening passage understandable for them. For instance, a college lecture should not be used for students with basic level of English but a content or topic that attracts their attention interesting for them.

Wilson (2009) mentions that content involves "interest factor, entertainment, cultural accessibility, speech acts, discourse structures, density, language level, delivery, length, quality of recordings, speed and number of speakers and accent" (p.26-29). Therefore, teachers must consider these points to make listeners be able to understand the listening passage.

**Table 3**

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
		%	%	%	%	%
14.	Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension	17.6	53.6	22.4	6.4	0
15.	Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension	23.2	44.8	25.6	5.6	0.8
16.	The length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message	35.2	32	28	4	0.8
17.	The content of the listening passage is abstract	28.8	46.4	22.4	2.4	0
18.	The poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage	20	34.4	28	16.8	0.8

Author: Christian Meza

Source: Students' Questionnaire

The following factors related to the listening passage allow to identify the causes to have difficulty in understanding listening input and they are the following.

The fourteenth is *Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with my listening comprehension*. The highest percentage that the participants of the survey chose for this statement is

53.6 % meaning that vocabulary seldom interferes with their listening comprehension of the passage. However, it still exists a number of students with a percentage of 22.4 % who sometimes have problems due to this cause.

According to the interviewed students, they said that when they have problems to understand the passage is because the words heard (few not all of them) are unknown and that is when they do not understand some ideas of the conversations or dialogues.

Other students mentioned that the words used in the listening input are formal and there are some phrasal verbs that they have not learned yet. Consequently, they lose the thread of communication and that it is difficult for them to return it.

According to the teachers, they disagreed with the parameter “seldom” because they said students sometimes do have problems because of the unknown vocabulary. That affects the way they understand the information because it makes them lose the concentration to understand the following ideas within the dialogues or conversations.

Ur (2004) states that “the sounds a listener absorbs during a normal conversation bear only a partial resemblance to a transcript in normal orthography, which in its turn bear only partial resemblance to a corresponding version in formal prose”(p. 8). That means that students have difficulty because English words are written one way but they are pronounced another way; consequently, the difficulty remains because more writing and reading activities are done rather than listening ones.

The fifteenth statement has to do with “*Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with my listening comprehension*”.

The highest percentage chosen by students in the survey was 44.8 % for “seldom” meaning that most of them think grammatical structure do not interfere with their listening comprehension of the listening message. However, 25.6 % of students chose that they sometimes view grammar as a difficult factor that hinders the correct comprehension of the listening material.

Thus, this one can be considered as one factor that makes students do not understand the ideas and it could be attributed to the lack of features of the language such as grammatical rules, tenses, etc. not because of the particular message they convey but for the spoken and written form, their meaning and the patterns that they fit into the discourse (Nation and Newton, 2012).

Therefore, having a clear understanding of the grammatical structure makes the listeners comprehend the listening material and not to be stuck in one part of the listening passage.

On the other hand, the surveyed teachers do not agree with the students’ answers. In fact, 80 % of them chose the parameter “often” to show that the grammatical structure, indeed, is a problem when trying to understand the passage. Whereas one teacher chose “sometimes” to say that they do have problems but not too often.

The sixteenth one is *the length of the listening passage hinders me to interpret the message*.

The majority of students think, with a percentage of 35.2 %, that the length of the listening passage never hinders them to interpret the message.

However, this factor affects other students as 32 % of them think that they rarely have this listening difficulty and 28 % of them think that they sometimes have problems with the length of listening passage.

The results, according to the students' perception, show that the length of the listening material do not have a considerable impact on the students' comprehension for most of the participants; however, other students still have this problem but in a low percentage.

The information collected in the students' interview showed that maintaining the concentration longer on a listing material is a factor that learners misunderstand and as a result, they do the listening exercises badly or even on the listening exam items.

On the other hand, according to the teachers' opinion, they think that the length is often a negative factor that hinders English learners to interpret the message. This date is supported by the answers given to the questionnaire in which 4 of them chose "often" and one teacher chose sometimes.

Therefore, the duration of the listening passage does affect the listening comprehension in the EFL classroom.

The seventeenth one is: *The content of the listening passage is abstract*. Most of the students with a percentage of 46.4 % think that the content of the listening passage is seldom abstract for them and consequently, it makes them have problem understanding the passage but at a low level.

However, the surveyed teachers think that sometimes students do have problems understanding the passage if the content is abstract because when the listening input has abstract ideas (ideas existing in thought but not having a physical or concrete existence such as love, beauty, education, happiness, etc), students sometimes misunderstand it.

Thus, the teachers' opinion gives us an idea about this issue because this really causes a problem in the listening comprehension of the information but at low level with the consequence of doing some listening items wrong.

When students were interviewed, they said that they did have problems understanding the content because these ideas exist in their minds and not in the physical world. In fact, out of the 25 interviewed, 10 of them said that they did not have so much practice in those specific topics and they hardly ever break down the listening input in small segments. They understand the main ideas of the listening input but they have difficulty with some specific points.

The eighteenth statement has to do with *the poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage*. Out of 125 surveyed students, 34.4 % percent of them said that the quality of the recordings seldom affect to understand the listening input.

Additionally, out of the 25 students who participated in the interviews, 7 of them said that sometimes they cannot understand the listening passage because the audio is not heard with clarity because of the poor quality of the speakers.

Therefore, the difficulty that students have is not for the poor quality of the recording but for the poor quality of the speakers of the rooms. Nowadays, classrooms have projectors to practice the listening skill with videos where listeners can watch interviews, dialogues, news and lectures. Teachers are provided with a cd player or a stereo where the listening material is played and the sound is heard clearly.

However, the problems sometimes come from the speakers of the classroom as the bass noises interfere with the clarity of the sound and the listening input is not delivered appropriately.

After having analyzed all the factors related to the listening passage, it is noticeable that the majority of students agreed with a 53.6 % that the unknown vocabulary is the aspect in which they have more problems by understanding the listening passage.

Also, this data was the most significant out of the all eighteen factors that has an effect on the listening comprehension process as it is the highest percentage in which the majority of students have problems; however, it is not a relevant impact since it does not happen often but seldom due to the high level of students.

Nevertheless, this real factor could be attributed to the great range of vocabulary that exists in the English language from very formal to very informal words in the form of verbs, nouns, adverbs and so on.

Also, the main cause for a listener to have problems with the listening input is the fact that the written form is different to the spoken form.

Regarding this point, Ur (2004) states "the sounds a listener absorbs during a normal conversation bear only a partial resemblance to a transcript in normal orthography, which in its turn bear only partial resemblance to a corresponding version in formal prose"(p. 8). That means that students have difficulty since English words are written one way but they are pronounced

another way; consequently, the difficulty remains as more writing and reading activities are done rather than listening ones.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

After the results have been presented, the data revealed that second-year English learners do not have much listening problems when they hear for the first time because most of the students have started their English language acquisition since early courses in their schools.

One of the factors that makes students struggle when listening to a recording is predicting what will come next in the conversation. Based on the results, most of the students in the population claimed to have problems when they had to predict the coming information however they try to solve it by grasping the ideas they understand and guessing the rest of them.

Another factor interfering listening comprehension is natural speech when there are hesitation and pauses. The majority of learners agreed that they seldom have difficulties understanding natural speech with hesitation and pauses due to the fact that they have had teachers who have lived abroad and they have returned with a good English level benefiting students with a natural speech in the way that native speakers would do.

Most of students recognize that lack of clear pronunciation makes them to have problems when they listen to input. The reason lies in the fact that students are not used to the stress and intonation patterns of English and these aspects influence both the realization of certain phonemes and the meaning of the utterance and consequently the main idea of the input.

Additionally, the lack of vocabulary also interferes with the comprehension of the words heard. Even though the unknown vocabulary present a problem for most of the students, this is not an important problem because it only happens often. However, it is reinforced that knowing vocabulary is essential for communication.

Grammatical structure also proved to be a cause for listening comprehension problems on students. Most of them said to have problems understanding input because they did not have a clear comprehension of features of the language not because the particular message they convey but for its spoken and written form.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

EFL Teachers should review with students the possible grammatical structures, vocabulary, slangs or idiomatic expressions in which learners could face problems before listening to the material. That way, listeners will be better prepared to understand the material for the first time and they will not need more time to hear the passage.

Regarding predicting, teachers could help learners understand the logical relationship between the first part of an expression and the second one because the latter is often signaled by a conjunction. For instance: “because” shows a reason, “in order to” a purpose, “but” or “however” a contrast or opposition. That way, students may have an idea about what to expect in the next part of the utterance.

Teachers might invite some native speakers to the class so that learners have a chance to hear a natural speech without any previous preparation for students to be able to hear hesitation and pauses and they can get used to them in time. Also, teachers might play some spontaneous interviews in class for students to gain practice understanding their utterances, of course with the teacher’s support.

Teachers also should make students practice the intonation and stress of words by reading poems out loud, songs aloud and speeches because that way they can get used to the pronunciation of words in the utterance.

Teachers should identify the specific grammatical structures with which students have difficulty and look for listening materials that include those structures so that students can discriminate the grammar within the conversations. Then, they can reinforce with listening exercises of FCE or CAE exams where all structures can be found.

Finally, teachers should go over new vocabulary with students by means of integration, repetition and meaningful use every class. They should connect new vocabulary to prior knowledge, they use the words many times to repeat them and they should provoke many opportunities to use new words in reading, writing, and speaking.



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## **ANNEXES**



**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR**

**DEOJA La Universidad Católica de Loja**

**OPEN AND DISTANCE**

**MODALITY ENGLISH**

**DEGREE**

**STUDENT'S  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Estimado  
estudiante,

La presente encuesta tiene como objetivo obtener información para conocer cuál es su opinión sobre **las dificultades que usted tiene para escuchar comprensivamente en las clases de inglés**. Cabe señalar que esta información será utilizadas con propósitos académicos exclusivamente; por lo que, le solicitamos comedidamente contestar el siguiente cuestionario:

**Instrucciones:** Marque por favor la opción de frecuencia que más refleje su criterio (UNA SOLA RESPUESTA POR NÚMERO).

**Dificultades como  
oyente**

<i>No.</i>	Enunciado	<i>Nunca</i>	<i>Rara vez</i>	<i>A veces</i>	<i>Frecuente mente</i>	<i>Siempre</i>

1	No entiendo el tema que escucho en inglés y por ello debo usar mi conocimiento o experiencia previa sobre el mismo					
2	Me es difícil entender lo que escucho en inglés y por ello debo escuchar todos los					
	detalles para entender la idea principal					
3	Tengo dificultad en hacer las actividades del texto que escuché en inglés por la falta de conocimiento del idioma					
4	Después de que el profesor pausa la grabación, me es difícil predecir (adivinar) la idea que continúa en el texto escuchado.					
5	Me es difícil mantener un diálogo corto en base al texto que escuché en inglés.					
6.	Es difícil para mí tener una idea general del texto después de la primera vez que lo escuché en inglés.					
7.	Me siento nervioso y preocupado cuando no entiendo el texto que escuché en inglés.					
8	Me es difícil entender el texto que escucho en inglés porque el tema no es de mi interés					
9	Me resulta más difícil comprender en inglés el texto grabado que el texto leído en voz alta por mi profesor(a)					

### **Dificultades con el hablante**

<i>No.</i>	Enunciado	<i>Nunca</i>	<i>Rara vez</i>	<i>A veces</i>	<i>Frecuente mente</i>	<i>Siempre</i>
10.	Me es difícil entender lo que dice un extranjero que habla inglés porque titubea (duda) y hace varias pausas mientras habla					
11.	Cuando escucho me es difícil entender el					
	el significado de las palabras en inglés porque el que habla no las pronuncia claramente					
12.	Me es difícil entender lo que escucho en inglés porque quien habla lo hace muy rápido					
13.	Es difícil para mí entender lo que escucho en inglés por las diferentes formas de pronunciar de los hablantes					

### **Dificultades con el texto que escucho**

<i>No.</i>	Enunciado	<i>Nunca</i>	<i>Rara vez</i>	<i>A veces</i>	<i>Frecuente mente</i>	<i>Siempre</i>
14.	El tipo de vocabulario utilizado en el texto que escucho en inglés no me permite comprender el tema					
15.	Las estructuras gramaticales que hay en el texto que escucho en inglés interfieren con mi habilidad de escuchar comprensivamente.					
16.	La extensión del texto que escucho en inglés me impide interpretar el mensaje					

17.	El contenido del texto que escucho en inglés es abstracto.					
18.	La mala calidad de las grabaciones de los textos que escucho en inglés en el aula no me permiten comprender el mensaje del tema.					

**GRACIAS POR SU COLABORACIÓN**



**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**  
**La Universidad Católica de Loja**

**MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA**  
**TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS**  
**CUESTIONARIO DEL ESTUDIANTE**

**STUDENTS' INTERVIEW**

1. ¿Cree Ud. que le es difícil escuchar comprensivamente en inglés dentro del aula?

Si ( )              No ( )

¿Por qué \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. ¿Cuál de los siguientes elementos cree Ud. que dificulta su habilidad de escuchar grabaciones en inglés en su aula?

Usted como oyente ( )

El texto que escucha ( )

El hablante (quien emite el mensaje) ( )

¿Por qué \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. ¿Según usted, qué factor(es) hace(n) que escuchar grabaciones en inglés en su aula sea difícil?

Mencione al menos tres por cada elemento y el por qué

El oyente ¿Por qué?

\_\_\_\_\_

El texto que escucha ¿Por qué?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

El hablante (quien dice el mensaje) ¿Por qué?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. ¿Qué hace Ud. cuando no entiende el texto de la grabación en inglés que les hace escuchar su profesor en el aula?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



APUNTES EXTRAS DE LA ENTREVISTA EN RELACIÓN AL TEMA:

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¡Gracias por su colaboración!



**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**  
**La Universidad Católica de Loja**

**OPEN AND DISTANCE MODALITY**  
**ENGLISH DEGREE**

**TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE**

Dear teacher,

The aim of this brief questionnaire is to obtain information concerning *your opinion about your students' listening comprehension difficulties in the EFL classroom.*

The following information will only be used for academic/research purposes. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible based on the following criteria.

**Instructions:** place an (X) in the box that best reflects your personal opinion

**The listener**

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Students use their experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the listening passage					
2	Students listen to every detail to get the main idea of the listening passage					
3	Students find it difficult to do listening activities because of their lack of					

	knowledge of the English language					
4	After you stop the recording, students find it difficult to predict what will come next					
5	Students find it difficult to hold a short dialogue after listening to a passage					
6	Students find it difficult to get a general understanding of the message from listening for the first time					
7	Students feel nervous and worried when they do not understand the listening passage					
8	Students find it difficult to understand the listening passage because it is not of their interest					
9	I find it more difficult to listen to a recorded text than to my teacher reading aloud					

### The speaker

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
10.	Students find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses					
11.	Student find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly					
12.	Students find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk too fast					

13.	Students find it difficult to understand well when speakers talk with varied accents					
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### The listening passage

<i>Item no.</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
14.	Vocabulary used in the listening passage interferes with students' listening comprehension					
15.	Some grammatical structures in the listening passage interfere with students' listening comprehension					
16.	The length of the listening passage hinders your students to interpret the message					
17.	The content of the listening passage is abstract					
18.	The poor quality of recording does not allow me to understand the listening passage					

**THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION**